

LOVE IN SLEEPY CAMP.

(From Mainly About People.)

It was too hot for work in "Sleepy Camp," so nearly all the men had given it up for the day and lounged into Zeb's saloon to have a smoke and a drink.

Though it was getting well on in the afternoon the sun was still blazing hot and there wasn't a breath of air to move the red dust. In a little shanty, not far from the saloon, sat two young diggers, both tall, well built men, but one handsome, the other ugly—hence their nicknames—Bob, the Beauty and Ugly Sam. Sam sat in the corner near the window, through which could be faintly heard the laughing and singing at Zeb's; Bob sat on the table, swinging his legs.

"It's a treat to git out o' that scorchin' sun," said Ugly, pulling a pipe out of his pocket and knocking the ash on the floor.

"Yes," agreed Beauty, stretching his arms and yawning fearfully.

"We've had a grand day, haven't we, Beauty?" asked Sam, striking a match on his boot.

"Yes," answered Bob, shutting his big mouth with a snap.

"You seem to take it awful quiet—you don't seem to grasp that we—we two pards—have found the biggest nugget ever dug up in 'Sloop Camp.'"

"Oh, yes, I do," replied Bob, kicking so hard at the table leg that it seemed more than likely the rickety old thing would give way.

"Let's have another look at it!"

So saying, Sam jumped to his feet and took a key out of his pocket, crossed to a large chest that was standing up against the wall, fitted it in the lock and threw back the lid with a bang.

It was a nugget—goodness knows how much it was worth.

"Isn't it grand," cried Sam, falling on his knees and patting it affectionately with his hand.

"I should say it was," said Bob, slipping off the table to have a look over Ugly's head.

"Another find half as big as that, and we're made fer life," and Sam closed the lid and locked it, putting the key carefully back into his pocket.

Bob crossed to the table and took up his former position.

"Ours has turned out a trump of 'er claim," he said.

Sam nodded his head and replied:

"Rather."

"What'll you do when yer have enough—give up work?" asked Bob.

"I might think o' doing so," answered Sam, relighting his pipe.

"Might git married, eh?"

"Maybe."

Bob slipped down off the table once more and went to the door—opened it and looked out. Two or three miners were passing on their way to their shanties; they greeted him with "Good evening, Beauty," and walked on. Bob kicked the door to and strode across to Sam, who was still puffing at his pipe.

"Look here, Ugly," said Bob; "it's no good us two goin' on like this, is it?"

"No," replied Sam, rising from his seat.

"What's ter be done?"

Sem shook his head.

"'Bout Lil, I mean," explained Bob.

"I know what yer mean, Beauty," and Sam looked intently at the floor as if thinking.

"Who does she like the best o' us two?" asked Bob.

"Can't say—the one she's talkin' to at the time, I guess."

"Look here, Ugly," said Bob, "we've always been good pals, we've not had rows like Hatchet and Black George, and it's a pity we should start now, especially 'bout a woman."

"Yer right enough there!" agreed Sam.

"Now, we both love Lil," continued Bob, and there was a perceptible catch in his voice at the word "love," "and we think she cares fer us both jist about the same."

"Ye."

"Well, if one were to go, the

one left would most probably have 'er—eh?"

"Yes," from Sam, with a nod of the head.

"Who's to go?" asked Bob.

The two men looked at each other—there was silence for a moment except for the distant laughing—then Sam felt in his pocket for something and said:

"You see this dollar piece? Well, it may sound a bit wrong to spin for her, but listen, Beauty, one of us two has ter go. I'll throw this coin up, you call, and if yer right I'll pack, but if yer wrong I'll stay."

Bob bit his lips.

"Is it a go?" asked Sam.

"And the one that goes, does he take his share?" Bob asked.

"He takes that," answered Sam, pointing to the chest. "If yer right yer have Lil—and I take the nugget, but if wrong yer go with the nugget and I stay with the gal."

"It seems a bit funny——"

"But," interrupted the other, "it's a way out of the wood; if we both staty ther'll be shootin'."

"All right, Ugly, it's a bargain." Bob drew a long breath. "We'll stick by the spin of that there dollar."

"We will. Shall I throw?" asked Sam quietly.

"Yes," came from Bob in the same tone.

"Call while it's high," said Sam, and up it went—spinning round and round in the air.

"Women!" cried Bob.

Down it came with a ring on the floor and rolled into a corner of the room.

"See what it is," said Sam.

Bob crossed hesitatingly and peered down into the corner.

"It's heads," he cried, "I've lost."

"And I've won," cried Sam, rushing over to the place and picking up the dollar, "my dear old lucky coin," and he put it to his lips and kissed it—then went to Bob, who was looking out of the window.

"Shake!" he said, holding out hand.